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The deadline for contributions for the Spring 2021 Newsletter is 31 March 2021 and should be sent via email to Philip J. Wise, Newsletter Editor, at philip.wise@colchester.gov.uk.

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Editorial

As I write this, England is in its second period of lockdown and elsewhere in the UK people are living under various restrictions on their daily life. During the first lockdown in the Spring and early Summer staff were furloughed or told to work from home and museums closed their doors. Indeed in a few cases museums were unable to reopen before the second lockdown and have had no visitors since March. Even so museum archaeology continued and is reflected in these pages.

Keith Fitzpatrick-Matthews presents a personal view of the impact of lockdown at North Hertfordshire Museum. Keith's experience chimes with my own: getting used to working from home and occasionally being let out to visit the stores to check on the collections.

As Keith notes, for some this has been an opportunity to undertake research and at the Seaside Museum, Herne Bay in Kent two remarkable letters from Charles Darwin and Sir Arthur Keith have been discovered. These are discussed in detail by Helen Wickstead and remind us of the connections which already existed between archaeology and natural science in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, particularly in terms of prehistoric lithics. A companion piece by Pete Knowles provides more information on the history of the Seaside Museum and its collections, and on his experience as a SMART project mentee. It is hoped that other mentees might be persuaded to write their own accounts for a subsequent newsletter.

Sutton Hoo, near Woodbridge in Suffolk, is one of the most famous sites in British archaeology. The story of its excavator Basil Brown, a failed farmer who was one of the 20th century's finest excavators, and his patron Edith Pretty is almost the stuff of legend and indeed a fictionalised account, 'The Dig' was published in 2007 by John Preston. Next year it comes to our screens in a Netflix drama starring Ralph Fiennes (as Basil Brown) and Carey Mulligan (as Edith Pretty). In the meantime, the National Trust

who now care for the site, have undertaken a major revamp which is reviewed here.

Also included in this issue is news of a revised edition of 'First Aid for Finds', the standard work on the subject, as well as new Scottish representatives on the Society's Committee – Claire Pannell and Gail Drinkall.

Lastly, for long-time SMA members there is the opportunity to spot themselves and others in two photographs of the 2000 Conference held at Reading Town Hall. What a long time ago it now feels!

I hope that you and your museums will thrive in 2021.

Philip J. Wise
Newsletter Editor

Museums in Lockdown: A view from North Hertfordshire



The strikingly modern frontage to North Hertfordshire Museum complements the adjacent historic building (© NHM, 2020)

As for so many industries, lockdown hit with little warning. We had started to deep clean, to wipe surfaces and handles regularly and offer hand sanitising gel throughout the building, but the announcement that we had to close gave us little time to prepare adequately. The decision, in line with government guidance, was taken at a higher level than the museum management.

All planned events had to be cancelled, whether they were held in the building or externally. Contacting those who had booked and paid for these sessions was not always easy: for those who had bought tickets through the online booking system we use, sending out an email and organising refunds was simple, but it was more challenging for those who had paid at the reception desk. We discovered that few people actually wanted to have their money refunded and they understood why we had to close at such short notice.

We needed to make sudden changes to the website, as this is often the portal that potential visitors use to find out opening times, current exhibitions and planned events. This was easy enough for the front page, but we had to ensure that all other pages listing exhibitions etc. were checked.

The council took the decision not to furlough staff, but to give them facilities to work from

home. In many cases, this was simply giving access to log in to the corporate IT system. Work programmes for all staff needed to be designed at short notice. This has generally worked well, as it has permitted staff to spend time on 'back office'-type jobs and collections research, for which there is usually no time during an ordinary working week. I have been tasked with writing up research into local history, looking at the archaeology and early history of rural parishes in the district, places that are often overlooked in favour of the urban centres. So far, I have located a previously unknown Roman villa, a possible early medieval ritual site and an early estate cut by the county boundary.

Staff have been visiting the museum every day to check environmental conditions – we currently have on loan an exhibition of Rembrandt prints that are sensitive as well as valuable – and to make sure that everything else was as it should be. Maintenance works have carried on as usual, with engineers adjusting the air conditioning and alarm systems. Closure also allowed contractors to carry out essential minor works without disrupting visitors.

Now that preparations are under way for a limited re-opening, it has been necessary to look at risk assessments, modified working procedures, revised staff rotas (recognising that two members of staff continue to self-isolate) and a booking system for small guided groups. In many ways, this is proving more difficult than organising the initial shut-down.

From a purely personal point of view, I have found the lack of social contact difficult. This includes contact with both colleagues and visitors; although they are useful, I lose concentration during Zoom meetings and find it difficult to make my views heard. Museums are very much a place of social interaction, despite the traditional view of them being just cases filled with dead things, and losing that (one hopes temporarily) has been the worst aspect of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keith Fitzpatrick-Matthews

(This paper was originally published as 'Museums: A Curator Perspective' in 'RESCUE eNews' in July 2020, page 3.)

Sutton Hoo Revisited

I first visited Sutton Hoo in 1981 on a university fieldtrip whilst a student studying the Anglo-Saxons. There were half a dozen of us in a minibus and we drove across a rough track to reach the cemetery. There was nothing at the site then apart from the barrows, the pine trees and a single wooden hut left over from excavations in the 1960s. Sutton Hoo had a mysterious, other worldly quality which stayed in the mind.

In Summer 2019, the National Trust began a phased reopening of the site following a major redevelopment project, called 'Releasing the Sutton Hoo Story', which cost £4 million, including a £1.8 million grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF).

The Trust had originally acquired the site in 1998, constructing two separate buildings housing a visitor centre and an exhibition hall in 2001. For some time the Trust had been concerned that some visitors didn't actually make it out to the archaeological site itself, being content to see the exhibition and have a cup of tea in the café. With this in mind the current project aims to ensure that visitors enjoy everything that Sutton Hoo has to offer.

Work began on site in October 2018 with the re-opening happening in stages during 2019; the first stage in April saw new walks around the site with changes to the retail and catering offer, and this was followed in August 2019 by a second stage with a new exhibition and a revamped Tranmer House, once the home of Mrs Edith Pretty who had instigated the excavations at Sutton Hoo in the late 1930s. The project was completed in September 2019.

The visitor begins their tour of the site by viewing 'an installation' of the Sutton Hoo ship in the entrance courtyard between the former stables and the shop/café building. This full-scale model in the form of a ship's skeleton is a very striking representation of the famous vessel buried in Mound 1. It is made of reddish brown metal set on a polished mid-grey concrete base and introduces the types of materials and palette of colours used on site. There are two accompanying interpretation panels – in the form of red-brown metal sheets set on mid-

grey concrete lecterns – which provide well written information about the ship burial itself and the Anglo-Saxon context.



The focus of the Sutton Hoo exhibition gallery: is the designer a Harry Potter fan? (photo © Philip J Wise)

The next stop is the redisplayed exhibition gallery, known as the 'High Hall', which tells the story of the Anglo-Saxon people associated with Sutton Hoo and takes as its starting point the death of king Rædwald. We see back-lit, life-sized images of specific individuals, starting with Raedwald's queen and including a warrior, a slave girl and a wise woman. The fact that there is no historical or archaeological evidence that it is actually Rædwald buried in the great ship in Mound 1 is conveniently overlooked. The space is rather sterile and lifeless, and lacks the wow factor of the original 2001 displays which included a full-sized, three-dimensional reconstruction of the burial chamber itself complete with replica objects. This was stunning and it was a mistake in my opinion when this was removed about six years ago in a previous minor upgrade. The centre piece of the exhibition gallery is now an empty space within an enclosed inner area overlooked by a dementor-like flying figure of the king. On the floor is a projection of the plan of the burial chamber and windows cut into the walls form showcases for the display of replicas of the finds – the shield and the helmet.

The elephant in the room (or the gallery) is, of course, the fact that almost all the real objects from the site are elsewhere; the finds from the first season of excavations in 1938 are in Ipswich Museum while those from the following year are in the British Museum. This will always be a problem for a curator trying to present the site and one can see why a storytelling approach has been adopted to make Sutton Hoo accessible to the non-specialist. Perhaps there is no other way of doing it, but one comes away with the impression that style has rather overcome substance in this case.



Tranmer House (photo © Philip J Wise)

Tranmer House is much better. Here in this modest Edwardian country house one learns about the excavations themselves and the personalities involved in one of the main reception rooms. Much use is made of archive photographs and film, including some in colour, and the remarkable story of the 1939 excavations is brought to life.

The third and final part of the visit is the Royal Burial Ground which is approached by a new path laid out across the heathland. There is also a more direct, accessible route from the car park. Along the way one encounters metal interpretation panels on concrete lecterns, short metal pillars decorated with images of finds from the ship burial and some metal cubes decorated with openwork designs.

The panels are in the same style as those already seen at the entrance. In some cases they are accompanied by solid concrete benches and a hard standing area. There is an issue here with erosion as the pressure of feet has worn away the grass around the

benches to reveal the sandy soil beneath. The pillars seem to have no real purpose and the one at the entrance to the Royal Burial Ground is positioned the wrong way round so that the visitor approaching the mounds sees only a blank surface. The cubes are lanterns that have been made by a local craftsman as part of the NLHF activity plan. Each one features a different design from the objects found at Sutton Hoo and they have been dotted around the landscape. The intention is eventually, once the pandemic has passed, to light them out of hours for evening events, and also add to their number over the coming years as a reason to return. Currently, the Trust is using them as part of a family trail that visitors can print off at home and arrive with on site (<https://nt.global.ssl.fastly.net/sutton-hoo/documents/sutton-hoo-lantern-riddle-trail.pdf>). Unfortunately, all these modern introductions have resulted in a rather cluttered landscape which compromises the character of the heathland between Tranmer House and the burial mounds. There is a tension here between preserving the setting of the burial mounds and making them accessible to the general visitor.



Observation Tower at the Royal Burial Ground (photo © Philip J Wise)

The Royal Burial Ground should be the highlight of a visit to Sutton Hoo. However, to

the non-archaeologist, the group of low mounds are not as dramatic, as say, the remains of a Roman villa or the ruins of a medieval abbey. To address this, the National Trust constructed a 17-metre-high viewing tower to provide a bird's eye view over the burial ground and the River Deben. (At the time of visiting this was not open to the public due to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic.) This poses an interesting question; is the visual intrusion of the viewing tower on the setting of the mounds outweighed by the ability to appreciate the landscape from a high vantage point? How one answers this, I suppose, depends on your prior knowledge of the site and level of interest. An archaeologist might prefer to see the site with as little modern intrusions as possible. The general visitor might relish the opportunity to climb the stairs to the top of the tower and experience a unique view of the East Anglian landscape in which (based on a photograph) the mounds are more prominent than they are from ground level.

Sutton Hoo is one of the most remarkable and famous sites in British archaeology. It remains to be seen whether the National Trust has done the site justice with its latest makeover of the exhibition gallery, Tranmer House and the burial mounds themselves.

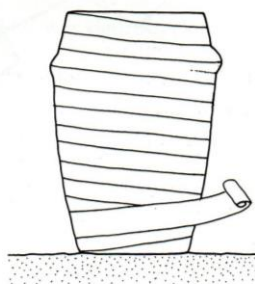
Philip J. Wise

Note: This review is based on two visits, the first being in August 2019 and the second twelve months later as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic. I am grateful to Laura Howarth, the National Trust's Archaeology and Engagement Manager at Sutton Hoo for answering my questions.

New Edition of 'First Aid for Finds'



Bandage in one direction, slowly excavating external earth



Bandage in opposite direction

Helen Ganiaris, the Chair of the Icon Archaeology Group, writes:

Icon Archaeology Group is now working on the fourth edition of 'First Aid for Finds', a practical field manual and source of information for everyone dealing with, or interested in, freshly excavated archaeological finds. With step-by-step instructions, it provides a benchmark for best practice in the care of archaeological finds at this stage. Conservation and care of finds are integral parts of the archaeological process from fieldwork through to post-excavation study and archive. Since it was first published in 1972, 'First Aid for Finds' has found a place in site huts, finds sheds, museum offices and archive stores not only in the UK but across the world. The fourth edition will be re-written, updated and expanded to serve a new generation of those concerned to preserve and protect archaeological finds in the 21st century.

This edition has four authors, led by Sarah Watkins-Kenney; the others are Jim Spriggs, David Watkinson and Nicola Emmerson. The authors are professional archaeological conservators with practical experience of all stages of the archaeological process: planning and preparation for fieldwork; recovery, packing and storage of artefacts in the field; post-excavation examination, analysis, conservation and investigation of finds; archival care, long-term storage, display and research.

The Icon Archaeology Group is coordinating the process; reviewers from all parts of the country will be assessing the text. These will include a group of student conservators from the UCL conservation programme who will consider it from the point of view of emerging professionals in the field. The volume will be published jointly by Icon and RESCUE. Past volumes have been published in collaboration with RESCUE; they will also be reviewing the text, coordinating the fundraising for publication and overseeing distribution. It is hoped that the volume will be published in 2021. Alongside the newly revised SMA standards, this will be an important complementary tool for workers in these fields.

Letters from Charles Darwin and Arthur Keith discovered through the SMART project

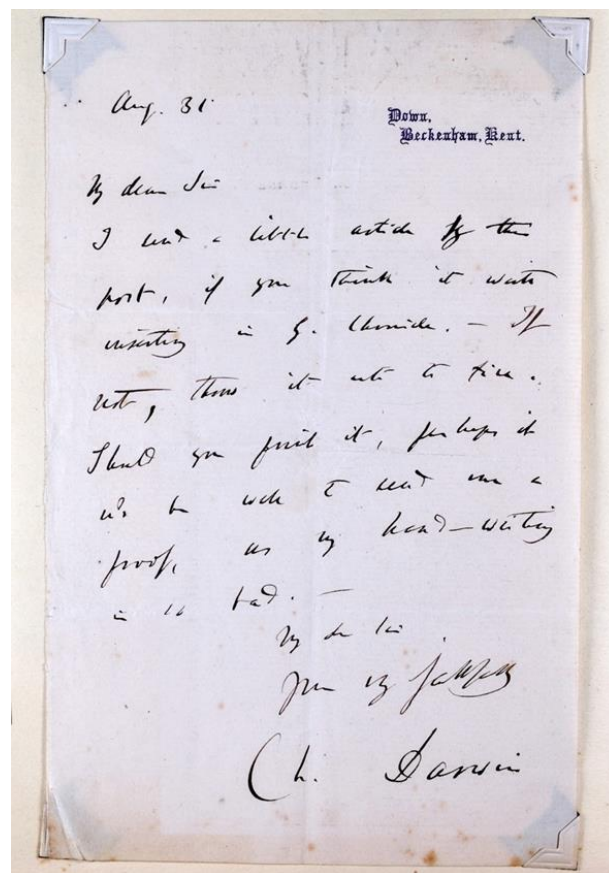
Helen Wickstead (Kingston University) and Pete Knowles (The Seaside Museum, Herne Bay) were mentor and mentee in the SMA's Resources and Training (SMART) Project. During the project they began studying the archives of the museum. Although this material contained vital information about the museum collections, most of it was previously un-indexed and it was the first time it had ever been studied.

As England went into quarantine because of the COVID-19 pandemic, Pete and Helen found a way to keep working on the project at a distance. Pete digitally recorded the archives and sent the files to Helen. Remotely, the two of them examined over 3,550 pages of nine scrapbooks created by the museum's founder Dr Tom Armstrong Bowes. This is Helen's story of what of they discovered...

On 8 June (2020), while England was in lockdown, Pete mailed me a memory stick. On the device were digital images of every page of the nine scrapbooks of Dr Tom Armstrong Bowes (1869-1954). Hundreds of newspaper cuttings, offprints, tickets, menus, leaflets, postcards, photographs, paintings and letters. The scrapbooks represented at least thirty years of collecting, beginning around 1921, when Bowes was 52, and ending around 1951, when he was 82. Pete and I began the painstaking process of reading every single page; he locked down in Herne Bay and I, 80 miles away in my bedroom in South London.

Around 11 o'clock one night, I dived back into a scrapbook I had left half-finished. Scrapbook four began with Bowes' usual eclectic and humorous melange, including his collections of illegible signatures and printing errors. As ever, there were pictures of all kinds of creature, especially big game, parasites, dogs and horses. The quantity and variety of information was overwhelming. By the time I got to page 71 I was beginning to lose concentration. However, on this occasion, something grabbed me; a signature I had seen before, 'Ch. Darwin'. There was

no mistaking the sparse characters and dilated C – it was a letter from Charles Darwin.



Letter from Charles Darwin to M. T. Masters, 31 August [1871] (DCP-LETT-7919F), from Dr Tom Bowes' Scrapbook 4, p. 71

Charles Darwin (1809-82) wrote letters almost every day of his adult life. Writing and receiving letters was a crucial element of his scientific method, which assembled a vast quantity of facts to theorize about the natural world. Darwin developed an extensive network involving hundreds of correspondents who sent, not just letters, but replies to Darwin's questionnaires, photographs, books, and specimens (dead and alive). Since 1974 the Darwin Correspondence Project, based at the University of Cambridge, has produced a comprehensive database of letters written by Darwin, as well as letters written to Darwin by other correspondents. Darwin's collected correspondence contains more than 15,000 items, many of which are now available online. Few historians of nineteenth-century science can have avoided encountering the Darwin Correspondence Project since googling around one's subject area almost

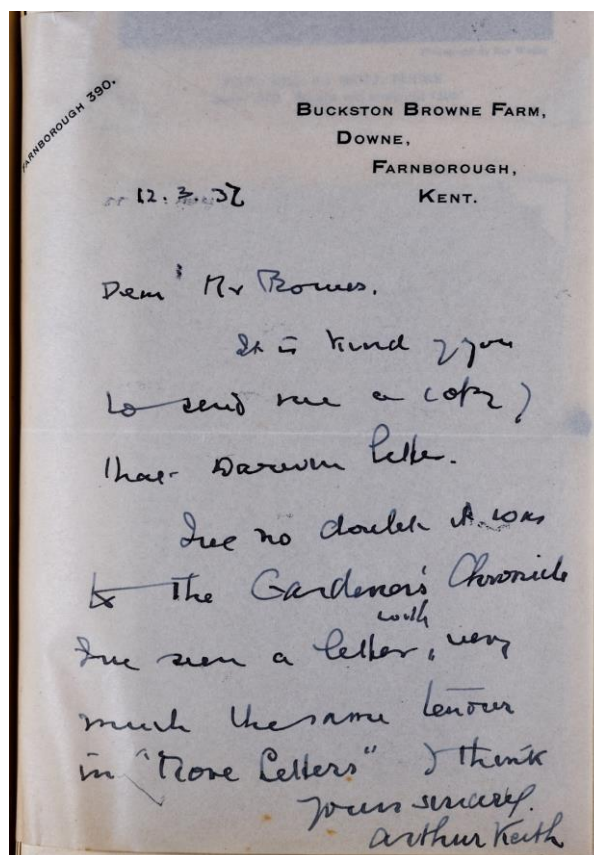
inevitably throws up a letter from their database at some stage.

At this point, Pete and I did not have much to go on with the Darwin letter. There was no year, the addressee was 'My dear Sir' and the handwriting was largely illegible. I could just about make out that Darwin was offering something for publication in the *Gardener's Chronicle* (or 'If not, throw it into the fire') and he wanted to see proofs 'as my hand-writing is so bad'.

The next day I contacted Rosemary Clarkson at the Darwin Correspondence Project. Rosemary got back to us instantly: 'Thanks so much for sending us the image of a Charles Darwin letter – I have to admit that even after fifteen years I still find a new letter exciting!'. She recognised the letterhead as one that Darwin only used between 10 May 1871 and 8 January 1872. The letter was written on the 31 August which meant it must have been the covering letter for Darwin's article on 'Fertilisation of *Leschenaultia*' in *Gardener's Chronicle*, 9 September 1871, p. 1166. It would have been addressed to Maxwell Tylden Masters, editor of the *Gardener's Chronicle*, a fairly frequent correspondent of Darwin's. Rosemary would transcribe the letter, get her colleagues on the team to proof-read it, and send us a copy of her transcription for the Society. Pete and I were delighted. Herne Bay Historical Records Society was the holder of a genuine letter from Charles Darwin.

I was relieved the letter was not a forgery. The scrapbooks were full of dubious artefacts Bowes had attempted to get authenticated, only to receive letters from experts saying they were not what he hoped for. Perhaps the most disappointing of these incidents was recorded in Scrapbook 3 (1932) when Bowes wrote to Reginald Smith at the British Museum about a flint nodule with the outline of a horse scratched into the cortex. Bowes picked this up at Cissbury (West Sussex) near a well-known Neolithic flint mine. Henri Breuil and James Reid Moir sent Bowes encouraging letters and Reginald Smith, who had previously written about and exhibited Bowes' (mostly genuine) Palaeolithic artefacts, got so far as drafting a short article announcing the carving to the world. Before Smith could do so, Bowes received a crushing letter from Leslie Armstrong; the scratches cut through, not just

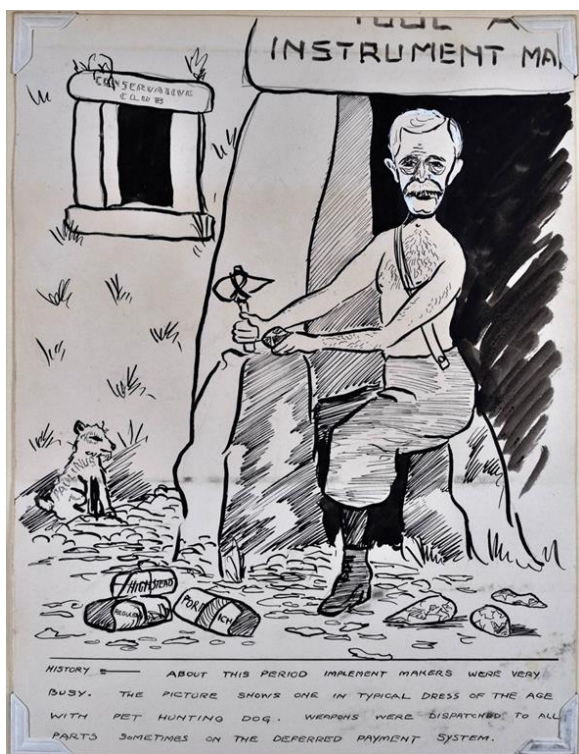
the surface patina, but even the lichen on the stone, and must have been 'drawn very recently indeed'.¹



Letter from Arthur Keith to Dr Tom Armstrong Bowes, 12th April 1937, from Dr Tom Bowes' Scrapbook 4, p. 72

Just as I did, Bowes wrote to a recognised authority about his Darwin letter, Sir Arthur Keith (1866-1955), renowned anatomist, Fellow of the Royal Society and Conservator of the Hunterian Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons. Bowes' scrapbooks, and the notes of Bowes' lectures, reveal him as a keen follower of Keith. Almost all the scrapbooks contain texts by Keith. The first articles of any length in Scrapbook 1 are Keith's 'Phases in the Evolution of Man', followed by an announcement of the discovery of Piltdown Man – a find that Keith considered confirmed his theories, and with which he would become strongly associated after his reconstruction of the Piltdown skull. These, and the other Piltdown materials in Scrapbook 1, appear in the scrapbook roughly ten years after they were published, so they were probably saved for some time.² Part of the affinity Bowes felt for Keith's science was probably down to the fact that both men were

anatomists who worked (briefly in Keith's case) as General Practitioners. Keith's writings often appeared in the *British Medical Journal* and other medical publications. Bowes' thesis explored the medical complications of inner ear infections including an analysis of skull morphology; a methodology Keith used extensively. Like Keith, although at a more local level, Bowes advised archaeologists, police and others in his community on the identification and conservation of human and animal bones. Bowes amassed material about evolution and items by and about Keith, throughout his collecting life.



Caricature of Tom Bowes, Scrapbook 4, p. 114

Keith's evolutionary theories were, even by the standards of anthropology of the time, violently racist. Keith believed racial differentiation was driven by hormones. Individuals were biologically programmed to bond with those of their own race and fight against other races, a mechanism necessary to evolutionary progress. Famously, Keith described war in the twentieth century as 'nature's pruning hook'; natural selection by cultural means. There is little in Bowes' writing or collections to suggest he disagreed with Keith's perspectives. Bowes collected

examples of humans who would, at the time, have been considered hormonal outliers: very tall or very short people, the exceptionally long-lived, masculine-looking women and trans men, extremely fat children, female athletes and contortionists. With the rise of fascism Bowes was not short of instances that seemed to confirm Keith's ideas of inevitable warfare between races. Around the time of the Second World War Bowes collected newspaper coverage of atavistic violence, anti-Semitism and racially-based genocide. Bowes was also interested in eugenics, collecting offprints by Arthur Tregold on controlling the reproduction of 'mental defectives', reports on population control and letters to newspapers advocating 'lethal chambers' to euthanase social undesirables. Bowes' lecture 'Can Man Survive?' (1950) is the closest he got to expressing these uncharacteristically pessimistic ideas about human populations himself.

Keith's accounts of human evolution favoured early origins for *Homo sapiens* and were thus a good fit with Bowes' interpretation of his collection of prehistoric stone tools. As part of the Herne Bay Museum Committee, Bowes selected Keith's popular book *The Antiquity of Man* for the reference library in the museum. *The Antiquity of Man* opens on the road from London to Maidstone, stopping along the way to the megalithic monument at Coldrum to visit 'the man who has made this part of Kent a Mecca for all students of early man', Bowes' friend Benjamin Harrison. Bowes and Harrison were both collectors of controversial objects called eoliths. Bowes would have been heartened by Keith's support for these objects as 'the earliest forms of tool ascribed to man' (even in the second edition of *The Antiquity of Man*), when many others thought eoliths were just natural pebbles. Herne Bay Museum reference library contained *Ightham: A Kentish Village and its Surroundings*, which drew heavily on Harrison's work and collections. We now know that the eoliths collected by Harrison and Bowes were not humanly-made, and by the 1930s this was becoming scientific consensus. Bowes' lecture notes show he clung to the idea of 'pre-Palaeolithic' tools even into the 1940s. Keith's evolutionary chronology allowed Bowes to hold out hope for his eoliths, which were depreciating in value as they lost the status of genuine artefacts.

Charles Darwin died in 1882 when Bowes and Keith were teenagers. Darwin's international celebrity left an opportunity for his successors to establish and control his legacy, situating their own work in relation to the 'Great Man'. In the media, Keith was presented as Darwin's champion. He wrote of himself as 'a Darwinist' and recalled being inspired to take up medicine by reading Darwin in his youth. Keith's inaugural lecture as president of the British Association for the Advancement of Science (or British Ass. as it was abbreviated in the 1930s) announced a campaign to purchase Darwin's home, at Downe, Kent, for the nation. Keith's call was answered by Sir George Buckston Browne, who funded the purchase and refurbishment of Down House, and the establishment of a research institute nearby, Buckston Browne Farm, which had a house attached for Keith as president of the British Ass. When Darwin's house was opened to the public it included a room devoted to portraits of presidents of the British Ass., who included two of Darwin's sons and Keith himself.³



Illustrations of Palaeoliths from Bowes' collection, Scrapbook 1, pp 119-120

In 1937, when Keith received Bowes's letter, he was living at Buckston Browne Farm in Downe with access to many of Darwin's books and letters. He was an authority not just on human evolution, but on Darwin and Downe (he wrote the forward to a history of Downe parish). Keith had lectured on Darwin at the British Ass. in 1927 and wrote the introduction to the popular Everyman Library edition of *The Origin of Species* in 1928, but his book *Darwin Revalued* would not appear until 1950. Keith's letter to Bowes is the only evidence that they communicated in person. It does not suggest Keith knew Bowes well – Keith addressed him as 'Mr' rather than Dr

Bowes – nevertheless Keith replied thanking him for the Darwin letter and saying he had no doubt the letter was to the *Gardener's Chronicle*. Keith had "seen a letter with very much the same tenour (sic) in 'More Letters' I think".

The letters from Darwin and Keith are far from the only valuable and interesting items we have discovered as a result of the SMART Project. We are now working on a publication that will reveal more about the context and history of the Bowes archives. Meanwhile Pete has produced a complete digital record of Bowes' lecture notes, lantern slides and scrapbooks that we hope will be useful to future researchers. Rosemary's transcript of the Darwin letter will be published in the Supplement to vol. 30 of the *Correspondence of Charles Darwin* which should appear in 2022, published by Cambridge University Press.

Endnotes

1. Photographs, X-rays and drawings of the stone along with correspondence from Leslie Armstrong and Reginald Smith can be found on pp 70-73 of Scrapbook 3.
2. Almost at the very end of Bowes' scrapbooks a single newspaper cutting reports on the radio-carbon dating of the Piltdown skull. The radio-carbon dates revealed the skull was an infamous hoax.
3. 'The Times' report on Arthur Keith's lecture to the British Ass. was headlined 'Darwin was Right: Sir A. Keith's Verdict'. The cutting can be found in Scrapbook 2, pp 3-4. Scrapbook 5, (p. 126) contains a review of a visit to Down House describing the room with portraits of former presidents of the British Ass.

Acknowledgements

This paper would not have been possible without the generous help of Rosemary Clarkson of the Darwin Correspondence Project, Cambridge University www.darwinproject.ac.uk

Picture credits: Pete Knowles with permission of the Herne Bay Historical Records Society.

Helen Wickstead

SMART Project mentee: Pete Knowles at The Seaside Museum

The Seaside Museum, formerly the Herne Bay Museum, was established in 1932 by the Herne Bay Historical Society. The local GP Dr

Tom Armstrong Bowes was one of the founding members, he was a keen amateur archaeologist and a fellow of the Society of Antiquaries and it is from his collecting that most of the archaeological collection has been formed. The museum is now run by the Herne Bay Museum Trust which is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. It's an Accredited museum, has five trustees and is run almost entirely by its fifty volunteers, with one employed, part-time administrator.



Pete Knowles, volunteer curator of The Seaside Museum's lithics collection

Prior to taking on the role of curator, I had been independently researching the Palaeolithic flint implements from east Kent's river Stour. A search of the HBHRS (Herne Bay Historical Records Society) archives, led to the finding of a missing photograph album 'Flints from Fordwich (High Pit)' by Dr Tom Armstrong Bowes, together with other associated archival material and a large collection of flint implements. I was able to get this collection gifted to The Seaside Museum on the understanding that I would continue researching and curating the collection.

Bowes built up his collection of palaeoliths in the interwar period, these came from the gravel pits on the edges of the Stour valley at Fordwich, Sturry and Canterbury; also from the foreshore at Herne Bay and Reculver. His flint implement collection became one of the larger and more significant collections in the British Palaeolithic record; it was a founding component of the initial museum. But since then it has had a long and troubled history, it was held in the museum basement and this

became a major problem when the basement was flooded during the 1953 North Sea storm surge. This was when much of the collection's provenance was lost, not only had Bowes created cryptic codes for all the sites, but these codes, accession numbers and dates of finds were written on gummed labels. The collection has since been held in temporary and insecure quarters (at one point a chicken shed), successive curators have then either not recognised the collection's significance or have been unable to interpret the narratives that these artefacts of deep antiquity can tell.



Some of Bowes' flint implements from Fordwich, together with his photograph album and one of his catalogues

Within the archive, there were several ledgers that catalogued Bowes' collection of prehistoric stone implements. These catalogues together with his photograph album have enabled me to evaluate the extent of the original collection, which I have established was housed in a series of seventeen cases and contained a total of 3,793 artefacts. The known extant collection is less than half this: 185 in the current Herne Bay museum, 1,479 in the British Museum, the rest are missing! Significantly within these ledgers there was a key to all the site codes. Whilst curating the collection I discovered a previously unknown assemblage of Palaeolithic ficron and cleaver handaxes. Fluvial archives with these assemblages are currently contributing to a new understanding

of the technological developments in early humans. Luckily these artefacts still had Bowes' original labels; after further research of the archives it was possible to trace their origin, which was from a gravel pit run by Cozen and Sons in the St Stephen's area of Canterbury. Bowes had acquired them after at least a year of bartering from an antiquities trader in Canterbury, a trade that was previously unknown before this research. Significantly the height of this pit places it in the middle of the local river terrace sequence; this potentially places the age of this assemblage at around 330,000 years ago, which is a key juncture in technological change in the Middle Palaeolithic.

I wrote a paper on this assemblage (currently in press with *Lithics*, the journal of the Lithic Studies Society); but I wanted to take my research further.

My main motivation in joining the SMART project was to find ways to develop partnerships with academia, to further this research. The museum was assigned Dr Helen Wickstead as our mentor. It became clear from the start that Helen and I both shared the same views on how important it is to not de-accession old collections, and the integrity of these collections is paramount to realising their full potential. My existing research has shown the reassessment of historic museum collections and archives can unlock the lost provenance of artefacts which could then radically transform current understandings of the technological developments made by early humans.



Ficron and cleaver handaxes from Canterbury

Helen immediately noted that the research and work I had been doing around the collection had doctoral research potential. We decided that within the limited time and framework of the project she would guide me through the process of writing a research proposal and that I should work towards applying for doctoral research. Helen hugely inspired me with confidence in my own abilities and, with her help, I was able to develop and submit a research proposal to Durham University. I have now started this research which will be exploring whether there is cultural patterning in Early and Middle Palaeolithic handaxe technologies of the Kentish Stour fluvial archive. My current research has identified at least seven museums with substantial Palaeolithic collections that will be able to contribute to this research. The SMART project and being mentored by Helen has been hugely successful for me as an individual. It has opened doors that I never knew existed, including now helping other museums as a consultant to curate their collections and develop new narratives around these most enigmatic museum artefacts of deep antiquity.

Pete Knowles

Minutes of the 43rd Annual General Meeting held on Friday 8th November 2019 at The Grosvenor Museum, Chester

Forty-one members were in attendance.

1. Apologies:

Christina Donald and Carol Anderson

2. Minutes of the 42nd AGM

The minutes of the 42nd Annual General Meeting held at UCL, London, were approved as a true record. Proposed by Duncan Brown, seconded by Kat Baxter, and approved nem. con. (Mark Hall abstained).

3. Matters Arising

No matters arose from the previous minutes.

4. Hon. Chair's Report

The Chair Duncan Brown gave the following report:

It is not always easy to assume the role of Chair for any society but my challenge was, I think, all the greater for having to succeed Gail, whose efforts and commitment had achieved so much for the Society. I was helped considerably by a group of sympathetic and hard-working committee members and together, I think, we have had a productive year that includes the SMART project and continuing SSN and other advisory roles. I have no wish to pre-empt the reports my colleagues are going to give but I will just congratulate everyone for keeping our various projects moving. Gail is still on the committee and manages our website and social media presence, as well as the SMART programme. She also remains our SSN representative. As Chair, I represent SMA at the Archaeology Forum, which has met once this year but generally, most of the work seems to have been done by other people, to whom I am most grateful, especially Kat Baxter, our Secretary, Lucy Creighton, Treasurer and Nick Booth, Membership Secretary. In fact, I thank all the committee for making my job easier, as well as making it fun but also because, due to their efforts, the Society is doing really well.

5. Hon. Vice-chair's Report

No report was presented.

6. Hon. Secretary's Report

Kat Baxter gave the following report:

2019 has been a very busy year for SMA. My role has been to support the committee, arranging meetings, writing minutes and being a point of contact for our membership. Committee meetings took place in January, April, July and September in London, York, Bristol and Reading.

I have been part of the working group for the SMART project, along with Gail Boyle, Lucy Creighton, Anooshka Rawden and Rhi Smith. As part of my duties on the working group I have been involved in shortlisting and interviews for our consultants, as well as attending progress meetings and giving admin support. I will also be delivering a training session at the two northern skills workshops in Manchester and Newcastle on standards in the care and management of

archaeological collections. The SMART project will be discussed later in the agenda.

I have also been busy organising the conference here at Chester. A lot of effort goes into making these conferences happen so there are a number of people to thank because, as always, it is a team effort. I would like to say a big thank you to Liz Montgomery, who took a lot of the work on in terms of planning what is happening on site, and arranging the field trip and catering and conference dinner. Thank you to Lucy, our Treasurer, who many of you will have been in touch with who processes all the payments and organised the dinner, and provided a great deal of support. Duncan and Gail have also been very involved in the conference, promoting the programme and making suggestions, so a big thanks to them as well. Special thanks also to Liz, Julie and Jane who gave a fantastic tour of the museum and city yesterday. And a huge thanks to all our speakers – we have had some inspiring papers and I'm sure it will continue this afternoon.

And finally, I would like to thank you all for coming. It gets harder to take time out to attend conferences such as this one but I hope you agree that it is completely worthwhile. It is great to see you all here and I would like to thank you for continuing to support the society.

Thank you.

7. Hon. Membership Secretary's Report

Nick Booth reported that SMA currently has 238 members. They are made up of:

- 205 in England
- 12 in Wales
- 9 in Scotland
- 3 in Northern Ireland
- 8 in the rest of the world (including Isle of Man, Channel Islands, etc.)

Since the last conference, SMA have had 31 new members join and 19 leave.

8. Hon. Editor's Report

Martha Jasko-Lawrence gave the following report:

Over the past year, I have been working on catching up with the journal publications. Most of the papers from the 2015, 2016 and 2017 conferences are in. I have been gathering papers for 2018 conference proceedings. The committee is considering moving away from a hard copy publication and so I am investigating the costs and practicalities of creating a digital version of the journal.

9. Hon. Training Officer's Report

See SMART Project update (item 11).

10. Hon. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer Lucy Creighton presented the accounts for the year ending 31 March 2019 (ratified nem. con.), and gave the following report:

The accounts for 2018-19 reflect another busy year for the Society. (NB All costs have been rounded to the nearest pound.)

Subscriptions

Membership subscriptions generated £2,904. This is over £1,000 less than that earned during the previous financial year.

Conference

The 2018 Annual Conference was held at UCL in London at a cost of £2,717. The venue was kindly provided for free. Expenditure breakdown was as follows: £1,262 to reimburse the travel and accommodation expenses of the speakers and of Open Access Archaeology who filmed the conference for free, £921 on the evening meal, £508 on catering and £26 on delegate packs. Higher than typical expenditure was associated with accommodation and the evening meal due to the conference location.

Ticket sales totalled £1,475 meaning that the conference generated a loss of £1,242. This, although a disappointment, reflects the true cost of running a conference and keeping ticket prices low. Our reserve funds covered this loss. Income from ticket sales was slightly higher than 2017's conference total of £1,093 but lower than other conferences in the last five years.

The conference was more popular than recent years however, with a total of 40 tickets sold, compared to 15 in 2017 and 23 in 2018. The price of tickets was significantly reduced to encourage attendance, a strategy which appears to have worked well to encourage attendance but is not sustainable for the future.

Publications

No journals were produced or new sales made during this financial year. A small payment of £51 was made towards the ongoing digitisation of back copies of 'The Museum Archaeologist' which have been made freely accessible on the SMA website.

Travel

£822 was spent on travel to allow SMA committee members to represent the Society at sector-wide meetings and a limited number of committee meetings if their employer cannot cover costs. Although £267 less than the previous financial year this reflects the consistently high number of meetings at which SMA is represented.

Miscellaneous

£480 was spent on Public Liability Insurance for the year. £80 was refunded for the overpayment of membership subs.

Projects

2018-19 was a very busy year for projects and project funding. The SMA received grant payments from Historic England for the continuation of two projects and was successfully awarded significant funding from Arts Council England's Subject Specialist Network grants scheme.

The SMA received £5,000 from Historic England for its **Annual Survey of Museums Collecting Archaeology project**. The year saw the third and final survey. The costs of running the project amount to payment of the project team and regional reps and the subscription to *Survey Monkey* which hosts the survey.

The SMA received £7,950 from Historic England for its **Scoping Studies and Guidance for the Rationalisation of Museum Archaeology Collections project**. This year saw the publication and dissemination of the guidance. The costs of

running the project amount to payment of the project team and digital design for the guidance. The project underspent by £1,163. Historic England has approved the use of this to develop and deliver a rationalisation workshop in early 2020.

The SMA received £24,707 from Arts Council England for its **SMART project** (Society for Museum Archaeology Resources and Training Project). This was the first stage payment of a total award of £49,413 for the period 2018-2020. Funds have been allocated to deliver various work streams to improve guidance and resources, develop mentoring and deliver training. No project spending was undertaken during this financial year.

Summary

At the close of the financial year, the Society had £44,050.46 in its current account and £5,102.37 in its savings account giving total assets of £49,152.83.

11. Update on SMART project

Gail Boyle reported that SMA was awarded **£49,413** by Arts Council England (ACE) in response to its application to the ACE Subject Specialist Networks Funding Programme, 2018-20. A SMART (SMA Resources and Training) Working Group has been overseeing recruitment and the development of the project, headed by Gail.

The three strands of work are well underway, as follows:

- A review of museum archaeology collections care and management standards to ensure they are updated and easily digested resources for all museum staff and volunteers working with archaeology collections. A consultant was appointed and has completed her review. We are now looking at taking this forward in terms of commissioning individuals to write the chapters of the new guidance.
- The provision of free training workshops with travel bursaries for attendees, covering the key skills required for archaeological collections care and interpretation, with an emphasis on use of

archaeological collections for public and community engagement. A consultant was appointed and the four venues and dates for the workshops have been arranged, starting in Manchester on 19 November.

- The development of a peer networking and mentoring programme. A consultant was appointed and five mentors have been matched with five mentees in the Southwest.

The first progress report has been submitted to ACE.

12. Proposed changes to Constitution

The Chair proposed changes to the SMA Constitution, which had been circulated to the membership on 27th September 2019 as follows:

Proposed amendment to the Constitution

SMA Committee has proposed changes to Section 6 of its constitution (see proposed new wording below). These proposals result from discussions about how our committee structure is organised and what we need going forward to do the best job we can for our members. In summary, instead of 7 officers and 9 ordinary members (some who have portfolio and some who don't), the new structure will have 10 officers (adding the Newsletter Editor, Assistant Treasurer and Digital Officer posts) and 6 ordinary members. The wording around who else SMA can co-opt onto Committee has been changed, and the requirement to include on Committee someone from the MA and a national museum has been deleted to allow more flexibility.

The proposed new wording is as follows:

6.1 The management of the Society shall be vested in a committee consisting of the following 10 officers who shall be members of the Society:

- *Chair*
- *Vice-chair*
- *Secretary*
- *Membership Secretary*
- *Treasurer*
- *Assistant Treasurer*
- *Editor*
- *Newsletter Editor*
- *Training Officer*
- *Digital Officer*

Plus

- 6 ordinary members

The committee shall also have the power to co-opt additional members:

- 1 individual from Scotland
- 1 individual from Wales
- 1 individual from Northern Ireland
- Individuals who increase geographical coverage or represent other professional archaeological organisations as appropriate. These additional individuals may act as corresponding members.

6.4 Any places on the Committee which are left unfilled by election or which become vacant during the year may be filled by co-option, due regard being given to those regional areas or specialist interests not already represented.

The changes to the Constitution were approved nem. con.

13. Committee 2019-2020

Nominations took place for the following positions:

Training Officer: Amal Khreisheh

Proposed by Jenny Durrant, seconded by Nick Booth, and approved nem. con.

Digital Officer: Gail Boyle

Proposed by Nick Booth, seconded by Kat Baxter, and approved nem. con.

14. Any Other Business

Gail Boyle highlighted the work of the Subject Specialist Network (SSN) Consortium, which aims to become the voice for SSN activity across the UK. Funding is available from MGS for people working in Accredited museums in Scotland to fund travel and share skills between England and Scotland.

<https://www.subjectspecialistnetworks.org.uk/about/introducing-the-subject-specialist-network-consortium>

A new Facebook Group has been created called Mentoring Women in Archaeology and Heritage. It has been set up to create a supportive mentoring 'buddy' network for all women including LGBTQIA+ individuals across archaeology and heritage. The aim is to be able to meet other like-minded individuals for career advice and support in a non-company affiliated environment. The link can be found here: www.facebook.com/groups/1587710151360340/

SMA committee member Philip Wise is still digitising back numbers of the Society's Proceedings. There will soon be up to Volume 30 available for free on the SMA website.

15. Date and Venue of Next AGM

The venue and date are to be confirmed.

Membership Matters

New Scottish reps on the SMA Committee

After a period when there was no Scottish representative on the SMA Committee it has recently been announced that there will be two from the 2020 AGM. They are Claire Pannell and Gail Drinkall who briefly introduce themselves below.

Claire writes: I am delighted to be joining the SMA as one of the Scottish reps. I am the Collections Officer for East Lothian Museums Service. Our collection encompasses everything from A to Z; Archaeology to Zoology! Coming from a post as assistant curator in Invertebrate Biology at the National Museums Scotland, I had to learn quickly about lots of other objects, and a large part of my learning has necessarily involved archaeology. Taking all the archaeology knowledge exchange courses that NMS had to offer really helped, and that led to my involvement with Scotland's Archaeology Strategy and then the SMA. I hope my experience will be beneficial in improving communications between archaeologists and non-archaeologists and I am looking forward to meeting the committee one way or another soon.

Gail writes: I've been part-time curator at Orkney Museum since 2015 and I'm

responsible for our archaeological collections. It's a long way from my birthplace of Hull, and I seem to have been slowly working my way northwards since leaving the Museums Service there in 2002. I'm a field archaeologist by profession, cutting my teeth on urban excavations in York, Hull and Beverley as well having a brief skip over the border to Wales. I moved from Hull to take on the role of museum's officer for Hartlepool Museum and Art Gallery, before being tempted back to commercial archaeology. Based in beautiful Barnard Castle (yes, I had my eyes tested there too!), I was post-excavation manager for Northern Archaeological Associates for seven years before leaving to concentrate on my freelance work as a finds specialist. But Orkney was drawing me in! We had bought an old farmhouse here to renovate as a retirement project when, all of a sudden, the curator's job was advertised and we jumped at the chance to move sooner rather than later. So here I am. I've always maintained links with 'down south' and I have been the Finds Research Group's website manager for many years. Joining the SMA committee is an opportunity to share the broad experience I've gained over the years and to add a different perspective from working in Scotland (though Orkney prefers to look towards Scandinavia rather than Scotland). I hope that I can make a positive contribution as a committee member and look forward to meeting everyone, even if only remotely.

Hedley Swain: new role for a past SMA chair

Brighton's Royal Pavilion & Museums Trust has announced Hedley Swain as its first Chief Executive. Hedley was chair of the SMA from 2003 to 2006 and has also served as the Society's Vice-Chair and Editor. He will leave Arts Council England, where he has been National Director for Museums and Area Director South East, for his new role. Management of the Royal Pavilion and Museums' venues and collections was transferred from Brighton and Hove City Council to the charitable Trust on 1 April 2020. Its impressive portfolio includes the Royal Pavilion itself, Brighton Museum and Art Gallery, Hove Museum and Art Gallery, Booth Museum of Natural History and

Preston Manor. We wish Hedley well for the future.

Back Numbers of 'The Museum Archaeologist'

'The Museum Archaeologist' will be of particular interest to museum studies students and researchers, and anyone currently working towards becoming an associate member of The Museums Association as they contain a wealth of original papers written by leading museum archaeologists.

Back issues of 'The Museum Archaeologist' up to volume 31 have now been scanned and are currently being uploaded to the Society's website.

Please note that Volume 14 was never published by the Society and Volume 19 'Museum Archaeology in Europe' is only available directly from Oxbow Books.

Hard copies of back numbers of 'The Museum Archaeologist' are currently being phased out as volumes are made available to download. Only very small numbers are being retained, mainly to meet orders from libraries. Intending purchasers should contact the Society's Publications Officer Philip Wise for details of current availability (see below).

Payment can now be made by PayPal.

Download a copy of our SMA Publications List from the Society's website and order back numbers online from **philip.wise@colchester.gov.uk**

Work is also beginning on scanning back numbers of 'Museum Archaeologists News' and these will be added to the SMA website in the coming months. There are some gaps in the Society's run, particularly before issue 23 (1996), so if any long-time members have copies of these the Newsletter Editor would be very interested in hearing from them.

From the SMA Archives: Reading 2000

In 2000 The Museum of Reading hosted our annual conference which was organised by the museum's David Pearson on behalf of the Society. In the Reading Borough Council magazine produced shortly after the event David wrote, '[The conference] was a great success with over 90 delegates attending from all over the UK. The theme of the conference was public archaeology and many lively debates were heard. In addition to the conference, two public evening lectures were given in the Concert Hall by TV archaeologists Mick Aston from 'Time Team' and Julian Richards from 'Meet the Ancestors' – both lectures proved extremely popular with almost 750 tickets sold over the two evenings'.



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